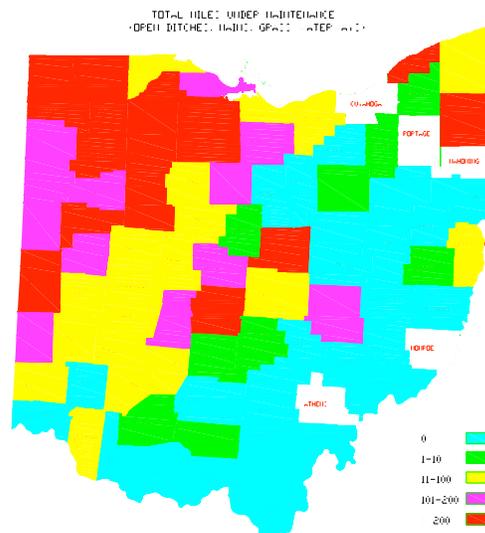


Drainage Survey Executive Summary (2005 ODNR-DSWC Rural Drainage Survey)

In November 2005, ODNR-DSWC sent out a drainage survey to all 88 Soil and Water Conservation Districts. The Division requested SWCD staff work with county engineers and other local government officials to complete the survey. This survey was modeled from a 1997 survey sent out by The Ohio State University. The length of the survey was reduced, but many of the same questions were asked in an effort to evaluate trends. The purpose of the survey is to evaluate the status and condition of Ohio's rural drainage infrastructure and the environmental sensitivity of local governments regarding public drainageways. We are hopeful to determine the number of drainage improvement projects that are in a backlog status and possible reasons for this backlog. This information will be utilized to determine if any changes that may be warranted to make the petition process become more effective.

Below are summarized results from the drainage survey. A full PowerPoint presentation can be obtained from ODNR-DSWC. Note that not all counties answered each question and may not be represented on the statewide maps; 85 of the 88 counties submitted a survey.

Reliance on man made drainage improvements is greatest in northwestern Ohio and decreased toward the southeast. Statewide composition of projects currently on county ditch maintenance programs are as follows: grassed waterways – 165 miles, subsurface mains – 5,947 miles, open ditches – 6,052 miles. Several urbanizing counties had large quantities of detention/retention basins and other miscellaneous items on maintenance.



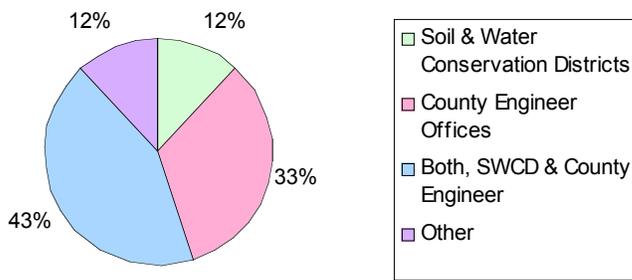
The Ohio map represents summarized totals of open ditches, tile mains and grass waterways in **miles** under maintenance for each county. (see legend)

White counties did not respond to the question.

According to local perspective, the condition of subsurface mains and ditches not on some sort of maintenance program are mostly in fair or poor condition. Only 30% of existing infrastructure was ranked good or excellent.

The vast majority of counties stated blocked tile, including both agricultural and rural residential, was the main reason leading to ditch reconstruction. Sediment bars and woody vegetation were also mentioned as reasons for performing ditch reconstruction.

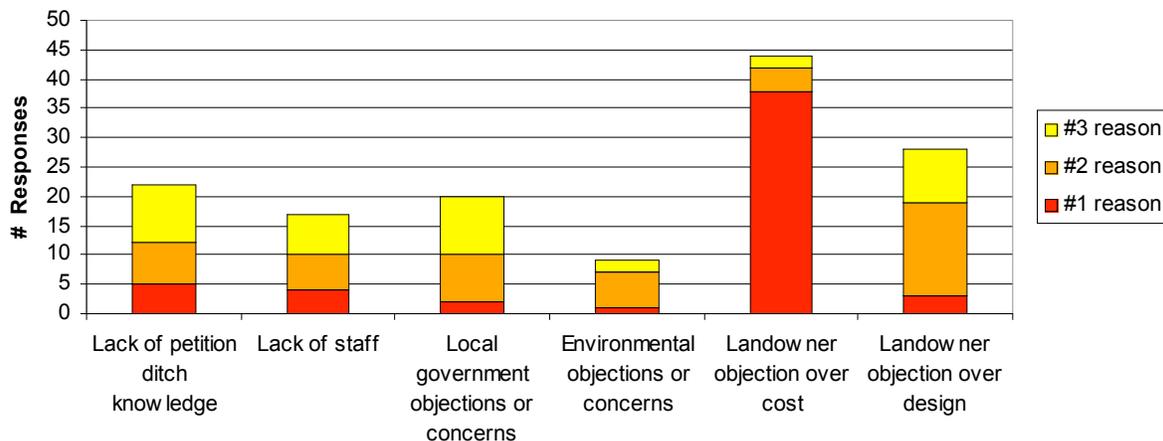
In most counties, either the SWCD and County Engineer work together or the County Engineer takes the lead in public drainage projects. Since County Engineers are involved in most instances, Ohio Revised Code 6131 is the leading legal process used. Ohio Revised Code 1515 is used by 23% of the counties that responded. Some counties utilize private engineers and watershed groups to assist with petition drainage projects.



This graph shows which agency at the county level that typically takes the lead in petition projects.

The average length of time from project petition to completion is typically 1-2 years or more and that time has significantly increased over the past five years. Landowner objections or concerns and lack of staff are the main reasons for this delay. Ironically, the current backlogs of projects tend to be in the counties with well-organized programs that lead the state in the number of completed projects. Whereas, some counties are no longer providing this assistance.

There are always projects that fail to proceed through the petition process. Those projects usually get derailed when assessment cost are figured or during initial meetings. Cost is the greatest concern for most counties. Several urbanized areas and northwestern counties did not consider cost a hindrance in the process. Initial meetings were the derailment step for several counties toward the top of list for getting projects completed as well as most of the counties that do little or no petition work. Many of the counties that do little petition work due to derailment during initial meetings indicated a lack of knowledge with the petition process. Cost is also the overwhelming reason projects fail to get constructed in these counties. The graph below indicates the reasons why projects fail to get constructed.



Only a handful of counties across the state felt their constituents considered environmental or water quality impacts of proposed projects important. However most counties are willing to offer alternative designs that provide more environmental protection as long as landowner cost for a project are not increased. Several counties currently use alternative designs on a regular basis.

Drainage issues on the rural-urban fringe create challenges. Many villages and rural houses rely on man made drainage improvements. Over 50% of these improvements are not on a public maintenance program, and few are being assessed for those that are on maintenance.

Overall, economics control what and how projects are getting completed. Local official perception considers drainage an important issue in most counties. Unfortunately many counties indicate their constituents don't feel the same way.